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AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNIST REVAMPMENT OF THE CONSCRIPTION SYSTEM

bу

Kan T'ang



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AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNIST REVAMPMENT OF THE CONSCRIPTION SYSTEM

by Kan T'ang

I. Preface

On the third day after the farcical conclusion of the illegal "Fifth Plenary Session of the People's National Congress", the first meeting of the illegal "Standing Committee of the People's National Congress" reviewed and passed the "Resolution Concerning the Question of Conscription" brought forth by the illegal Ministry of National Defense's Deputy Minister Su Jung. The essential content of this "resolution" is that the Communist VIP's want to "carry out a system of combined compulsory and voluntary soldiers."

Twenty-three years have passed since the Communists proclaimed the "method of conscription" in 1955. In reality, the uniting of the "military reserve service" and the "people's militia" by the Communists is the basis of their military power. Because the illegal "method of conscription" has not been changed for such a long period of time, now following the establishment and change in new leadership, where is the reason for it? This is worthy of our deep review.

II. General Situation of the Conscription Systems of Each Country in the World

Before studying the revampment of the Communist's conscription system, we will first take a look at the general situation of the conscription systems of each country in the world. Each country of the world, to accommodate the demands of national sentiment and national defense selects different conscription systems and different

lengths of time for military service. These can be generally summarized as follows:

- 1. The conscription systems are divided into compulsory conscription, voluntary conscription, conscription by examination and universal conscription. Examples of these four are:
- a) Compulsory conscription: Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, West Germany, France, Egypt, South Africa, Laos etc. Most nations follow this system.
- b) Voluntary conscription: the United States, Canada, England, Austria, Japan, India and Burma.
- c) Conscription by examination: Philippines, Indonesia, Bolivia, Peru, Equador, Tunisia and Senegal.
- d) The use of both compulsory and voluntary conscription is further divided into two categories:
- 1) Those who use the entire nation for those of military age as in Taiwan and Mexico.
- 2) Differentiating according to race or religion as in Israel where compulsory conscription is limited to those of the Jewish race and voluntary service is limited to Moslems and Christians. Also in Rhodesia compulsory service is limited to whites while Asians, colored peoples and blacks can only serve as voluntary soldiers.
- 2. As for the length of service, besides North Korea where army and navy service is five years and the air force is three to four years, the nations of the world all have service of within three years. None of them go beyond three years. For example:
 - a) Differing according to the type of service: in

Taiwan and South Korea service in the army is two years and in the air force and navy, three years. In the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Poland, army and air force service is two years while navy and border defense units serve three years.

- b) Not differing according to type of service to determine length of service: Egypt and Cuba both have a general three years, Syria and Greece have two and a half years, Turkey has 22 months, East Germany and Paraguay have one and a half years, West Germany has 15 months, Brazil and France each have one year.
- c) Differing according to sex: men in $_{\mbox{\sc Israel}}$ serve three years while women serve two.
- d) The time of service in each branch of the military does not reach to one year: Belgium and Finland only have 8 to 10 months, Switzerland seven and a half months, and Australia, Ireland and Libya have the shortest at six months.

The above is the present situation of the different conscription systems and different lengths of service that each nation of the world has chosen to use. However, any nation's conscription system is not unchanging, for depending on the demands of circumstance, the systems can be appropriately revamped. For instance, the United States originally had a selective compulsory conscription system, but because during the Vietnam War, American society was deluded by Communist psychological warfare, anti-war sentiment became prevalent. For example, the heavyweight boxing champion Ali dared to publicly burn his draft card and would rather sit in jail than serve as a soldier. The American people were not ashamed but some went so far as to

applaud Ali. At that time, the Nixon government was pressured and had no choice so that in September, 1973 the conscription service was changed into a voluntary one. From this it can be seen that conscription systems are flexible. The revamping of the length of service is also a frequent occurrence.

III. The Contents of the Communists Revamping of the Conscription System

On March 7th of this year, the Communist "New China Agency" published in summary the "Resolution Concerning the Question of Conscription". The main contents can be arranged under the following four categories:

- 1. The Communists themselves claimed: "From 1955, since the carrying out of the compulsory conscription system to attain the support of all nationalities within China, it has been practically proven that the carrying out of the compulsory conscription system has played a great role in developing the building up of the reserve strength of our military, in strengthening the construction of our military and strengthening the building of the people's militia."
- 2. Regarding the reason for the revampment, the Communists say: "Following the continual development of our military's technical installations, the demands for the quality of military and administration of fighting soldiers and the technical level have been raised even higher. In order to carry through the teachings of Mao Tse-tung regarding "reorganizing the military" and "preparing for battle", and grasp the principles of Hua Kuo-feng and the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party for the adoption of military

strategy to govern the nation, strengthening the revolutionizing of our military and building modernization, we must specially resolve the carrying through of the system of unification of compulsory and voluntary conscription and extend appropriately the length of service of the soldiers now under compulsory service.

- 3. Regarding the method of revampment of military conscription, the Communists say: "Starting in 1978, the years of compulsory service will be distinguished as: a soldier in an army unit will serve three years, soldiers in the air force, marine corps and special technical units of the army will serve for four years, and soldiers in naval vessel units and army boat units will serve five years. Those soldiers who entered compulsory service before 1977, should have their length of service accord with the original regulation in force at that time".
- 4. Regarding the measures concerning changing from compulsory to voluntary soldiers, the Communists say: "In order for the units to maintain a fixed numerical basis of a technical core and increase fighting power, the present filling of the compulsory service for soldiers should be based on the requirements of the units and the individual willingness to surpass the time of service. To secure and strengthen the technical mainstay force of the units, those soldiers under compulsory conscription who have passed their service time can change to become voluntary soldiers and remain in the unit for longer service. The time of service for volunteer soldiers is 15 to 20 years and the age is generally not past 40. If the unit requires it and the individual is willing, the length of service can be appropriately extended".

The above four points of the "resolution", discounting the large amount of stereotypical Communist propaganda cliches, actually

has three concrete rules. The first is the differing rules regarding the length of service for the Communist army, navy and air force. Second is the changing of soldiers under compulsory conscription to volunteer soldiers which is limited to the "technical mainstay". The third is the sequential system of extending service from three to five years and after going through a "short period of service" one can change to become a volunteer soldier for 15 to 20 years. If they want to accord with the demands of the Communist military, they can then "appropriately extend" and after the age of forty become a professional Communist soldier.

IV. Comparison of the New "Resolution" and the Original "Method of Conscription"

On July 30, 1955 the "Method of Conscription" announced by the illegal State Council had 9 sections with 58 articles. The part in it which is related to the new "resolution" is in the seventh, ninth, tenth and eleventh articles of the first section of "general laws". This is compared in the following table:

The Original "Method of Conscription"

Article 7: The present rules for the length of service for military personnel and soldiers are as follows:

- 1) The present service for soldiers in the army and public security forces is 3 years.
- 2) The present service for the defense units of the air force and navy, and the military personnel and soldiers of the public defense force navy vessels is 4 years.
- 3) The present service for the military personnel and soldiers in the navy's sailing vessels is 5 years.

Article 9: Based on the needs of the military, the State Council has the right to extend the time of service for military personnel and soldiers, not to exceed 4 months. The Ministry of National Defense has the right to transfer servicemen from one branch of the military to another which will be done according to the length of their service.

Article 10: When the time of service for military personnel is finished, based on the needs of the military and the individuals? own willingness the time of service can be extended with a minimum service of one year.

Article 11: Reserve service for military personnel and soldiers stops at age 40; when that time comes one retires from service.

The New "Resolution"

The time of compulsory military service is divided into:

- 1) Army unit soldiers, 3 years.
- 2) Air force, marine corps unit and special technical unit soldiers, 4 years.
- 3) Naval vessel unit and army naval craft branch unit soldiers, 5 years.

There is only mentioned the "needs of the military unit" and the "individual's own willingness" but the power of decision for this one level of extended service has not been established. Transference to

another branch of military service is also not mentioned.

When the compulsory service is finished, the extension of service should be based on the needs of the unit and the willingness of the individual. Soldiers under compulsory conscription who have surpassed their required time can change to become volunteer soldiers. This service is limited to 15 to 20 years.

For all those who are not over 40 years of age, given the needs of the unit and individual willingness, the time of service can be appropriately extended.

Comparison

- 1) The Public Security Forces have already been done away with (note).
- 2) The army units are still three years, the special technical units were changed to four years and the naval vessel units were changed to five years.
- 3) There were no changes in the air force or navy.
- 1) The new "resolution" mentions more frequently the item of "individual willingness".
- 2) Because the new "resolution" has not established the power of decision for extending service, it is more flexible than the original "method of conscription".

- 1) The original "method of conscription" only regulated military personnel.
- 2) Conscripted soldiers who surpass the compulsory service of a minimum of one year can change to become volunteer soldiers, extending their service to 15 to 20 years.
- 1) The original "method of conscription" had those of the reserve service retire at the age of 40.
- 2) The volunteer soldiers under the new "resolution" are over 40 years of age.

Based on the above comparison, we can recognize the following four points concerning the "Resolution concerning the question of the conscription system":

- 1. The basic time of service in the Communist army, air force and navy of three, four and five years has not changed. Only the special technical units, because of technical demands, have been extended to four years and the army sailing vessel units to match the naval vessel units have been extended to five years.
- 2. The regulation for the surpassing of military service time is according to the "needs of the unit" and the "willingness of the individual". Actually the needs of the unit" which is an important article is true but the "willingness of the individual" is false. They only want the Communist military to recognize "needs", for the individual is only to obey without any "willingness" to speak of. This is designed to create an increase in the quantity of the Communist

military.

- 3. The surpassing of time of service of the military personnel was extended to the soldiers, from "a minimum of one year" to "15 to 20 years". This kind of procedure of changing from a conscripted soldier to a voluntary soldier after surpassing the compulsory time of service is an important content of the Communist revampment of the conscription system, as well as its most special feature.
- 4. The time of service for military personnel and soldiers in the reserves originally set at 40 years of age was changed so that volunteer soldiers at 40 "still could appropriately extend the time". The amount of time it can be extended to is not explained but this kind of extension is obviously for becoming a "professional soldier".

Note: In the first few years of the establishment of the illegal government, Lo Jui-ch'ing (in January, 1966 he was removed from the illegal position of "Chief of the General Staff Department of the P.L.A.", in August, 1975 he was "liberated" and is now a leading member in the Military Commission) directing central and regional public security units incressed their number to 1,500,000 persons. In January, 1955 it was expanded into the public security army and became an independent branch of the Communist military. Lo Jui-ch'ing was commander and political commissar. At that time he was very influential and powerful, even more so than Beriya of the Soviet Union. After the second meeting of the Communist "Eighth Party Congress"

the illegal Minister Of Defense P'eng Te-huai, to expand his power, disbanded the public security army and placed those connected with that army in the defense division of the General Staff Department of the P.L.A. The regional public security units were then called the "people's armed police," each of which was to be run by the provincial or city public security agencies. The provinces and cities were also responsible for the expenses. The public security army was then announced as dissolved. After Lo Jui-ch'ing's power was stripped from him he desired revenge so that in 1959 at the time of the Lu Shan Meeting he supported Mao and Lin's vanquishing of P'eng and Huang.

V. The Background and Aim of the Communist Revampment of the Conscription system

Twenty-three years have already passed since the Communist implementation of the "method of conscription". In that time there have not been any modifications and now after the illegal "Fifth Plenary Session of the People's National Congress" they have suddenly revamped. We judge that they must have a certain background and certain aims. They can be divided as follows:

1. Background:

A. The problem of the position of the people's militia. In the system of the Communist "armed forces" there have been changes in the position of the people's militia which can be seen from three parts of the illegal constitution:

1) In July, 1954 article 20 of the second part of the illegal constitution only established that "the armed forces

belonged to the people" but there was no mention of a "people's militia".

2) On January 17,1975 was passed the regulation of article 15 in the second part of the illegal constitution: "The Chinese People's Liberation Army are the leading sons and brothers soldiers of workers and peasants of the Chinese Communist Party, the armed forces of all the nationalities of China". This was a time when the Cultural Revolution faction was in power and tried to have the people's militia become a "second armed force" which resulted in a "confrontation" with the regular Communist military.

of article 19 of the third part of the illegal constitution: "The Chinese People's Liberation Army are the leading sons and brothers soldiers of workers and peasants of the Chinese Communist Party, the armed forces of all the nationalities of China. They are the pillars of the dictatorship of the proletariat". This passage had already wiped out the "people's militia". It further says: "To greatly strengthen the building and revolutionizing of the Chinese People's Liberation Army and strengthen the building of the people's militia". The "liberation army" is going to strengthen the building of "revolutionizing". But what will the "people's militia" strengthen to build? There is no goal. This is obviously after the overthrowing of the "gang of four". The original "second armed force" of the people's militia are already reduced to the position of subsidiary units and reserve units.

B. The deterioration of the Communist military's revolutionizing". In the ten years from 1966 to 1976, the years of

the Cultural Revolution, the group of Chiang Ch'ing infiltrated into the military a large number of "revisionist soldiers" with "long horns on their heads" and "long thorns on their bodies" disciplining an upper class who were "offensive" and "confronting" which is erroneous "revolution". The "revolutionary tradition" of the Communist military was demoralized and their discipline was lost. For example. from May 22 to July 3 of last year, the Communist Liberation Army published ten consecutive articles by critics called, "should or should not" explaining how serious the problem was within the Communist militia. Besides this, the Communists have managed the demobilization of the Communist soldiers, reversing the past method of making appointments according to excellence and adopting the arrangement of "from where one comes, there one goes". This caused the Communist military camps to become tired and listless and the whole military was soft, lazy and degenerate. Last year the Communist military in the Nanking area with over 1,200 troops became uncontrollable and unable to be taught. Thus they were sent back to their original units and sent down for reform through labor. Therefore, when the new illegal constitution wants to strengthen the Communist military's "revolutionized construction", it is like shooting an arrow.

C. The trend of the Communist military's modernization. The line of the Communist military to build the military has been up to now to use "millet and rifles" as the basis. Mao Tse-tung all along persisted with his "revolutionizing" and P'eng Te-huai although he went a degree further with "modernization", after a short time was purged by Lin Piao who also followed the "revolutionizing" path. Up

until after September, 1976 when the United States Secretary of Defense Sachlesinger, who is now Head of the Department of Energy, visited the Communists and discovered that the Communist military weaponry was fifteen years behind that of the United States and the Soviet Union, the Communists were flustered and had to frequently concede that this backwardness was true. Because of this, from July of last year, just after Teng Hsiao-p'ing reappeared, the socalled "four modernizations" were very much talked about. "Modernization of defense" is one of the important "four modernizations" of the Communists. Its concrete demands are for the renovation of the Communist military's weaponry. From September 15 to September 25 of last year, because the illegal "Assistant Chief of Staff" Yang Ch'eng-wu led a large "military friendship visit delegation" to France, they have wanted to purchase French-made "phantom style" tanks, ground-to-ground "cactus model" and ground-to-air missile systems, "Zealand style" anti-tank missiles, naval missiles and all-weather anti-aircraft missles. Whether or not the Communist's weaponry becomes modernized or to what extent it does so, this is the path they must take.

D. The Communist military's "need to prepare for battle". Hua Kuo-feng in in his "Report on the work of the government" at the "Fifth Plenary Session of the People's National Congress" concerning the "resolution" of the conscription emphasized that the Communist military must continue to uphold Mao Tse-tung's "readjusting the military" and "prepare for battle". As for "preparing for battle", although this is a common Communist slogan, yet it is true for other-

wise why should they maintain a long-term military of over three million? Actually, on the north the Communists have a large Soviet military waiting to attack them, on their southeast there are 600,000 Nationalist soldiers lying in wait and inside the country there is a vehement mass-supported anti-communist movement so the Communist military must prepare for battle. At the end of last year, Wei Kuo-ch'ing disclosed that 60% of the entire Communist military guards against the Soviet Union, 20% guards against the Nationalist military and 20% maintains order in the Communist areas. This shows that their "preparing for battle" is not at all untrue. Further, considering the Korean Peninsula in the northeast, the Indo-China Peninsula and Southeast Asia in the southwest, as to whether the Communist military will be able to be used in those places is a topic for another discussion.

Based on the above-mentioned background of the Communist military, The Communists now want to revamp their conscription system. At the least there are the following four points:

1. The downgrading of the position of the people's militia has restored the Communist military system. When the illegal government was first established, the "Common Program" adopted by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference had this regulation in article 4: "The armed forces of the People's Republic of China is composed of each military branch of the Chinese People's Liberation Army". The regulation of article 58 is: "After carrying out this method, the people's militia should continue to maintain public security and protect the responsibility of building production".

We can see that before the "method of conscription" was announced, the Communist conscription system took the people's militia as its main force and after the announcement of the "method of conscription", the people's militia fell to the position of maintaining public security in the regional areas and protecting production. Yet on September 29,1958, Mao Tse-tung again brought forth his conspiracy of "energetically organizing the militia into divisions". At that time they developed very quickly and in less than a month there were 156 militia divisions established in Pei-p'ing. Although afterwards they met with resistance and a degree of obstruction from the strengths of P'eng Te-huai and Lo Jui-ch'ing successively, after P'eng and Lo were purged, the development and power of the people's militia fell into the hands of Chiang Ch'ing's group. Coming to be entered into the second part of the illegal constitution it became a "second armed force" in opposition to the regular Communist militia. Now with the Chiang Ch'ing group having been stamped out, the new ruling faction uses the skill of the revampment of the conscription system to again reduce the people's militia to the position of supplementary units restoring "military power" to each branch of the military. This is a natural occurrence.

2. Improving the quality of the Communist military and maintaining the "revolutionary tradition". The original "with one law established, one corruption is produced" was the common law in ancient and modern times and at home and abroad. No one could avoid it. After the Communist's "method of conscription" was carried out

there appeared many corrupt practices. Among them the most serious was the entrance and retirement of Communist soldiers who relied on the "law" for their comings and goings. For the three to five years of service, since there is already compulsory service, therefore in times of turmoil the "revolutionary spirit" will slowly disappear. This is unimportant. for even more disastrous are the results of struggle for power of the Communist chiefs which results in a government in ruins, a bankrupt economy and a chaotic society. The aim of the Communists for having youths serve in the military is what Han Pei-hsin, Committee Seretary and Assistant Director of the Revolutionary Committee of Kiangsu Province, said at the beginning of the year: "To have the units become escape places for the agricultural laborers and air raid shelters for those escaping from social class struggle." The Communist compulsory military having developed to this stage cannot but change. If they are to change they only have the method of "uniting the compulsory and voluntary military".

3. Regarding the technical demands and preserving the achievements of training. One of the special characteristics of the present war is the remarkable progress in technology in the military. With constant change and improvement the demands of a fighting soldier are much more serious and complex than the age of "when the gold drum is sounded, the swords and spears are raised." For example, one military soldier, from entrance into training, where they are divided into seperate squads, companies and battalions for specialized training and the technical soldiers such as those

trained in machinery, armaments, communications or as drivers, requires a minimum of one and a half years or more to finish the training. Because of this, those countries which have compulsory conscription systems all feel the same difficulties; when the soldier finishes his training he wants to retire from the military. All of the great effort put forth in training was in vain. The Communist military service from three to five years is already the longest in the world. So they cannot extend it again and because of this the only way for them is to have "surpassing the time of service" and a "volunteer military".

"preparing for battle" at any time: Because it is difficult to the Communists basic nature of struggle regarding the internal and the external they have not only created a situation of "war on all sides", but moreover there is the potential for the eruption of war on each side. Because of this, they must "prepare for battle". To prepare for battle, they must strengthen their fighting power and extend the time of military service to preserve the achievements of the training. This is an important step in strengthening fighting power. The regulation in article 13 of the original "method of conscription" was: "After mobilizing the nation 1) Those presently serving in the military should continue to maintain their posts and the Ministry of Defense should disband the time of service." Although this is one way of extending the time of service in time of war, yet it is only a method of remedy and not as natural as a voluntary military.

The above is based on the present and past background of the

Communist military and judges the aims of their revamping of the military conscription system. Within the realm of reason, to study that part of the Communists we can only make "presumptions" and in this way not make any decisive conclusions.

VI. Conclusion

The most special features of the revamping of the conscription system of the Communists are the strengthening of the technical core and changing the units from compulsory to volunteer soldiers. If we refer to article 15 of the old illegal constitution, the regulation that the Communist military "is a permanent fighting group, work group and production team" has already been scratched off. Futhermore, very recently the Communist military has restored military ranks. This shows that after Mao Tse-tung died, the new ruling faction has been pushing the Communist military toward "the capitalist line".

At the conclusion of the illegal "Fifth Plenary Session of the People's National Congress" the new Communists with power who are sharing the spoils have followed up the illegal "method of conscription" with a new "resolution". This "resolution" at least reflects part of the new ruling faction's general internal and external policies. In regard to the internal, the position of the people's militia who have encroached on the "revolutionizing and modernization" of the Communist's regular military has been reduced. Regarding the external, there is the "preparing for battle".

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